

National Dialogue on Highway Automation Readout

June 26 – 27

PHILADELPHIA - The Federal Highway Administration held a "National Dialogue on Highway Automation" session in Philadelphia this week, the second in a series of national workshops on highway automation. The sessions are designed to facilitate a dialogue and information sharing between the federal government and our partners. Nearly 200 participants from industry, state and local transportation agencies, research institutions and universities, met to discuss the integration of automated vehicles into our roadway system.



Photo Source: Federal Highway Administration

The meeting was kicked off by FHWA's Associate Administrator for Policy Mala Parker, and was followed by discussions, led by FHWA officials, on policy and planning issues that need to be considered in preparation for the safe and efficient integration of automated vehicles on our nation's roadway infrastructure. Parker said these dialogues give participants an opportunity to help shape the future of transportation and improve safety, system performance, mobility, and access through automation. She likened the occasion to those that brought about a vision for conceiving and building the King's Highway Bridge, the nation's oldest bridge, built in Philadelphia in 1697.

While in Philadelphia, FHWA leaders heard from transportation professionals and stakeholders who dove deep on a variety of issues that will affect their decision-making.



Photo Source: Federal Highway Administration

The participants reported out on what they learned in their breakout sessions. In the area of planning, scenario planning will be critical to infrastructure decisions that will be relevant for the next 10 years.

The group agreed that existing Transportation Improvement Plans (TIPs) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Plans (STIPs) will continue to play an essential role in their planning processes.

Determining the impacts of automated vehicles (AVs) may take time (or be difficult), which means planning is an important exercise. Planners will have to think about law enforcement, work zones, and road workers, along with the impacts on travel behavior. In addition to "communication, cooperation and collaboration," public engagement will be key to public acceptance of AVs.



Photo Source: Federal Highway Administration

The participants also discussed policy challenges as they relate to automated vehicles. The need for consistency was discussed – especially regarding the terminology being used in the world of automated vehicles. There was a recognition of the benefits of uniformity for all states insofar as standards are concerned. It was agreed the federal government should have a leadership role with the input of states and localities—and that the current regulatory culture should reframe itself around a culture of innovation.

On the second day, Ken Petty, of FHWA’s Office of Planning, facilitated a panel discussion on preparing for highway automation with policy and planning leaders – Robert Grant of Aurora, Patricia Hendren of the I-95 Coalition, Bill Keyrouze of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) and Rick Schuettler of the National League of Cities.



Photo Source: Federal Highway Administration

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Secretary Leslie Richards gave the welcome address on the session’s second day and thanked the USDOT for organizing the National Dialogues.



Photo Source: Federal Highway Administration

She said the first automated vehicle was created in Pittsburgh, which has been the “global epicenter” of AV and an “urban proving ground” because of advanced testing on roadways. Richards highlighted the complex challenges with AVs, in terms of planning, building and operating the nation’s roads and that we’ll have to learn to govern for the next generation.

Richards told the group that dialogue is central and that public engagement is important so that multiple voices are heard. Public acceptance is also key to

automated vehicles. Richards stressed it was vital for innovation to occur in all transportation modes.

Also on the second day, Acting Federal Highway Administrator Brandye Hendrickson was the keynote speaker. She said it was an exciting time for the future of our nation's transportation system. Automated technology—including automated cars, trucks and drones—have the potential to revolutionize the way we travel, transport goods and connect with one another.

Hendrickson stressed that in Philadelphia the discussion was focusing primarily on highways—but that, in fact, every part of the U.S. Department of Transportation was critical to helping shape the future of this technology and to ensuring it operates safely and efficiently. She shared the six basic principles that are guiding the Department's work in automated vehicle policy and that Secretary Chao announced at USDOT's AV Summit earlier this year.

She stressed that safety would *always* be the Department's top priority.

Hendrickson said the future of our nation's transportation system was bright. She said the new technology holds the promise of saving lives while making travel more convenient and efficient. Among its many benefits, the technology could increase access to

transportation — especially for our elderly and people with disabilities. And it has the potential to help decrease highway fatalities and injuries by addressing the root cause, which is human error. In fact, autonomous technology can help improve safety across all modes of transportation, not just automobiles. But there are challenges as well.

Hendrickson stressed that the National Dialogues are part of a sincere and harmonized effort to obtain meaningful feedback and facilitate conversations about the pressing issues that will drive future actions—and that everything learned would be used to help inform and direct FHWA, particularly in the areas of research, policy and programs.



Photo Source: Federal Highway Administration

As industry continues to develop, test, and deploy new technologies, FHWA wants to understand these issues, as well as how they will affect the many state and local agencies responsible for maintaining and operating the nation's roadways. Hendrickson closed by saying FHWA was uniquely positioned to serve the highway community and transportation agencies and that one of the agency's strengths is the close working relationship it has with state DOTs. Through national leadership, the agency can provide technical expertise and promote the sharing of noteworthy practices among the states so they can learn about AV adoption and implementation from each other.

More information is available from the National Dialogue on Highway Automation Web site at <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/automationdialogue/index.htm>.